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VALUE-ADDED SERVICES:

Incorporating Pharmacy Students in a Hospital Setting

Megan Unger, *College of Pharmacy*

STUDENT AUTHOR BIO SKETCH

Megan Unger, a PharmD candidate in her fourth professional year in the College of Pharmacy, completed an introductory pharmacy practice experience at Deaconess Hospital in Evansville, Indiana, during her third professional year. This was the third of thirteen experiential learning rotations that she will complete prior to graduation in 2019. Her future plans include pursuing a postgraduate residency training program. In this article, Megan highlights the value-added services that pharmacy students can provide to institutional pharmacy settings and the patients served.

INTRODUCTION

Experiential learning is a required component in all Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) curriculums across the country. Some experiential learning is service-learning, where students apply their didactic knowledge of medications and medical conditions in practice settings to reinforce and enhance learning, while at the same time serving and benefiting the community (PJSL, n.d.).

The experiential learning program at Purdue University consists of four levels, one in each year of study. The first three are collectively called the introductory pharmacy practice experiences (IPPE), and in the fourth professional year they are called the advanced pharmacy practice experiences (APPE). This article describes my third-year requirement—the four-credit hour institutional pharmacy IPPE (Purdue College of Pharmacy, 2017). This experience serves as pharmacy students' foundation in hospital practice. For most students, it is their first time in a hospital setting. For those with previous experience, it provides an additional, more structured opportunity for learning and insight into this career path.

Figure 1 (banner image, above). Megan working on her standard operating procedure document for emergency heart surgeries.

During this rotation, I was immersed in hospital pharmacy operations, sterile product compounding, clinical application of didactic material, and best practices in hospital settings. I completed 160 hours of clinical, performance-based experience over a four-week period. The objective of this article is to describe the value of this experience not only to me, but also to the hospital, my on-site mentor, and the patients I served.

DESCRIPTION

In 2017, I was fortunate to gain summer experience as a technician at Rady Children's Hospital in San Diego, California. This experience inspired my interest in hospital practice, allowing for a smooth transition to my institutional pharmacy IPPE rotation at Deaconess Hospital in January 2018.

Deaconess Health System's mission is to advance the health and wellbeing of its community, with a compassionate and caring spirit. With values based on commitment to quality, Deaconess strives for pride in workmanship, respect for all people, and education for continuous growth and knowledge. This health system consists of seven hospitals, thirty care sites, and various freestanding facilities that provide progressive patient



Figure 2. Megan standing outside Deaconess Midtown Hospital in Evansville, Indiana.

care, including behavioral, cardiac, oncology, women's health, and general medical services. Located in south-western Indiana, Deaconess (n.d.) reaches twenty-six counties in three states (Indiana, Illinois, and Kentucky), impacting a population that is home to mostly white, middle-aged patients. With a 21.7% poverty rate, it provides health care to a lower socioeconomic population (United States Census Bureau, n.d.). With the multispecialty network of health care professionals, Deaconess provides an excellent learning environment for PharmD students.

While on rotation, students complete a workbook of activities that includes retrieving research articles, conducting interviews, reconciling medication therapies, and presenting responses to drug information questions. It also includes investigating antimicrobial stewardship programs, and preparing patient care plans, as well as learning pharmacy operations, staff roles, and medication safety principles. The workbook serves as a rotation guide, ensuring that all students meet the same learning outcomes, regardless of their institutional IPPE site. However, these are minimum requirements, and each experience can be tailored by the preceptor (student mentor) to meet the specific needs of the student and the mentor, while providing value to the institutional site. Participation in patient counseling, clinical decision-making, and professional discussions enhance collaboration and learning for all. The ultimate beneficiaries of student-enhanced knowledge and skills are the patients they serve. The mentorship and constructive feedback I received at my site provided a challenging and effective learning environment, which enhanced my confidence and growth as a rising professional. It is a great example of how utilizing students efficiently and effectively can add value to a site and improve patient care.

Because of my previous experience at Rady Children's Hospital, I was immersed into a more clinical but still primarily observational role at Deaconess. In this role, my preceptor, Tyler Scott (PharmD), provided me with the opportunity to connect with many pharmacists and other health care professionals across multiple hospital campuses. These interactions led to participation on rounds, kinetic dosing practice, an improved understanding of medication safety procedures, and mentored relationships with a resident and fourth-year pharmacy student. Additionally, I was challenged with weekly topic discussions on chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, hypertension, and diabetes, as well as a journal club presentation, writing a standard operating procedure (SOP) document, and creating a therapeutic interchange for sulfonylurea drugs. These additional activities not only reinforced and added to my knowledge base, but also refreshed Dr. Scott's knowledge on the most recent clinical guidelines to ensure optimal pharmacy care.

COMMUNITY AND PATIENT IMPACT

A combination of didactic and experiential learning opportunities produces well-rounded pharmacists who communicate effectively with patients and colleagues when providing pharmacy services. Most institutions are able to provide pharmacy students with opportunities for direct patient contact, as well as interaction with a variety of health care professionals. During my rotation, I attended medication safety meetings and the monthly Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee meeting, connected with a home health care nurse, and had discussions with many clinical pharmacists, which improved my communication skills. It was apparent that this institution values student pharmacists' impact and is a model for other hospitals that precept students.

Prior to my rotation, I was unfamiliar with terms such as "topic discussion" and "standard operating procedure," as well as the formal structure for journal club presentations. Although these were obstacles at first, Deaconess provided templates and examples of projects in a resources folder that were accessible to all introductory and advanced rotation students. This folder was a great benefit during week three of my rotation when I completed an emergency heart protocol project that resulted in the creation of a standard operating procedure document. This project outlined the steps for the pharmacy, nursing, and perfusion departments during an emergency heart surgery on weekends when the satellite surgery pharmacies are closed. Additionally, I was tasked with creating a therapeutic interchange for sulfonylureas to be presented to the Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee

after the completion of my rotation. As a student pharmacist, these were value-added services that I provided to my rotation site.

STUDENT AUTHOR IMPACT

My rotation at Deaconess resulted in a rewarding four-week rotation that tested my clinical knowledge without the added strain of rigorous coursework. I reviewed specific didactic material on multiple disease states in an effort to apply this knowledge in an environment that was not exam based. My knowledge base was further enhanced through discussions with Dr. Scott about personal finance and personality styles relating to leadership—topics that are critical to success postgraduation but are rarely touched on in the PharmD curriculum.

Because Dr. Scott and I regularly measured my personal success throughout my rotation at Deaconess, my level of confidence improved and my output advanced. I understood my expectations and developed a mentored relationship with him. These personal and professional gains have prepared me for more direct patient care and projects with higher expectations during my fourth professional year.

Reflecting on my experiences (i.e., topic discussions, journal club, therapeutic interchange, and standard operating procedure document), I recognize the value of my preparatory work that resulted in active-learning experiences and beneficial discussions that enhanced my learning. Progressing forward, the current Purdue College of Pharmacy institutional IPPE workbook

could include additional, supplemental material to aid in student success on similar projects, ultimately leading to added value in institutional pharmacy settings.

CONCLUSION

The demand for engaged IPPE hospital preceptors is increasing, as heavy workloads and responsibilities increase simultaneously. Therefore, it is important that we highlight opportunities and demonstrate the value that students bring to a rotation site and to their patients. IPPEs are often the first opportunity for many students to work in a hospital setting, and my experience serves as an example of how students can provide valuable services while learning. There was a clear mutual benefit for me as a student, my preceptor and the site, and the public we served. Experiential learning is a stepping-stone to the future success of student pharmacists who will provide direct patient-care services.

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Figure 3. Megan working on her document.

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